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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #0232 0440459
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 130459Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3241
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 8105
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5355
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9211
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5249
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS SEOUL 000232

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/PD FOR SWALKER, EAP/P, EAP/K
STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAX/ITP SCHEIKH
STATE PASS USTR FOR RCASSIDY
USDOC FOR 4430/IEP/OPB/EAP/JDONIUS
TREASURY FOR OASIA/MGREWE
CINCPAC FOR J-74

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KS](#) [US](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IN SEOUL

Subject: Media Reaction; Seoul

East Asia and Pacific: North Korea

"National Security Worries"

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilb editorialized (02/13): "Amidst a series of signs that North Korea may soon test a long-range missile, North Korea's propaganda newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, has abruptly asserted North Korea's right to use and develop space technology. Furthermore, the fact that Chinese vessels have stopped fishing in the West Sea is definitely an unusual move. Nevertheless, Seoul is exceptionally quiet, marking a stark contrast to Washington, where warnings about North Korea's provocations come out every day. Some even predict that the North will probably seek to launch an attack calibrated to be too small for Washington to intervene but strong enough to cause psychological shock for the ROK. With the economy in such bad shape, we can't afford concerns over national security. The ROKG must show confidence and resolution on the matter."

"North Korea Should Not Miscalculate Things with a Missile Launch"

Moderate Hankook Ilbo editorialized (02/13): "Despite Washington's warnings and concerns, North Korea appears to be pushing for the launch of a ballistic missile. It is also unusual that Pyongyang replaced the Minister of People's Armed Forces and the Chief of the General Staff at the same time. We do not know what judgment the North made about the situation before making this move and how the internal circumstances in the North affected the move. Some observers speculate that it is designed to grab Washington's attention, but the North's saber-rattling against the Obama Administration, which is willing to have direct talks with it, will not benefit U.S.-North Korea relations. It will only give ammunition to hawks."

Stephens